

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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SUBJECT: MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS--"O SECULO" PUBLISHED, RADIO

RETURNED TO CHURCH

REF: LISBON 7634 (DTG 241224Z DEC 75)

SUMMARY: TWO FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS, REAPPEARANCE OF "O SECULO" NEWSPAPER AND OFFICIAL RETURN OF RADIO RENASCENCA TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, ESSENTIALLY COMPLETE THE GOP'S BASIC MOVES TO DENY THE
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COMMUNISTS CONTROL OF STATE-OWNED MEDIA. CONSOLIDATING ITS CONTROL

OVER RADIO, TV, AND PRESS WILL STILL BE A DIFFICULT TASK FOR AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. RADIO RENASCENCA IS RETURNED TO THE CHURCH--A DEC. 28 COMMUNIQUE FROM THE MINISTRY OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED RETURN TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF RADIO RENASCENCA STUDIO AND TRANSMITTER FACILITIES IN LISBON. THE STATION'S FACILITIES IN OPORTO AND IN CENTRAL PORTUGAL REMAINED IN THE POSSESSION OF CHURCH AUTHORITIES, EVEN AFTER LEFT-WING WORKERS TOOK OVER THE LISBON FACILITIES ON MAY 29, 1975. THAT TAKEOVER-- FOLLOWING WORKER FERMENT AT THE STATION SINCE JULY 1974--SPARKED A LONG-LASTING CONTROVERSY. ON JUNE 28, THE GOP ANNOUNCED THAT THE STATION WOULD BE RETURNED TO THE CHURCH, BUT WHEN THE WORKERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT ACTION, THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL NAMED AN ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL TO OVERSEE THE STATION AND THE WORKERS AGREED. THEN, ON SEPT 20, 1975, THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT SENT TROOPS TO OCCUPY LISBON STUDIOS AND HALT PROGRAMMING. ON OCT 16 THE GOP CLOSED AND SEALED THE LISBON TRANSMITTERS. THE TROOPS DEPARTED. AFTER CONSIDERABLE LEFT-WING AGITATION, THE TRANSMITTERS WERE REOCCUPIED BY WORKERS WHO PUT THE STATION BACK ON THE AIR ON OCT 23 IN DEFIANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT. ON NOV 7 THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ORDERED THAT THE LISBON TRANSMITTERS BE SILENCED. TROOPS DESTROYED TRANSMITTING EQUIPMENT WITH BOMBS. RENASCENCA MEANWHILE REMAINED ON THE AIR IN OPORTO AND CENTRAL PORTUGAL. TRANSMITTER

DAMAGE FROM THAT BOMBING COUPLED WITH OTHER NEEDED REPAIRS AT THE STUDIOS, COULD KEEP RADIO RENASCENCA IN LISBON OFF THE AIR FOR SOME TIME. IN ADDITION, LEFT-WING WORKER FERMENT WILL CONTINUE, EVEN THOUGH STATION OFFICIALS ASSERT THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF RENASCENCA'S SEVERAL HUNDRED WORKERS ARE LOYAL TO THE CHURCH. THE LEFTIST DISSIDENT WORKERS, IN A REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE DEC 27 "DIARIO POPULAR," CLAIMED THAT THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT'S DECISION NOT TO NATIONALIZE RADIO RENASCENCA--THE ONLY EXCEPTION IN THE PRESENT PROGRAM TO BRING RADIO UNDER STATE CONTROL--WAS INCORRECT, AS 60 PERCENT OF THE OWNERSHIP IS PRIVATE AND ONLY 40 PERCENT BELONGS TO THE CHURCH. THIS OWNERSHIP ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, IS DISPUTED BY THE CHURCH WHICH CLAIMS TO CONTROL THE STATION COMPLETELY.

2. "O SECULO" IS BACK ON NEWSSTANDS: "O SECULO" NEWSPAPER
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RESUMED PUBLICATION DEC 29. IT WAS LAST OF THE EIGHT PAPERS WITH SOME DEGREE OF STATE OWNERSHIP--ALL SUSPENDED NOV 25--TO RETURN. BLATANTLY COMMUNIST-LINING BEFORE ITS SUSPENSION, THE PAPER RETURNED AS A RATHER BLAND, APOLITICAL PAPER; ITS LEAD EDITORIAL DEC 29 ALLUDED FAVORABLY TO FREEDOM, JUSTICE, PATRIOTISM AND OTHER SIMILAR UNIVERSAL VIRTUES. THE POLITICS OF THE NEW EDITOR, EDUARDO SCARLATTI, AND HIS DEPUTY, MANUEL MAGRO, ARE KNOWN TO BE LIBERAL AND PLURALIST; MAGRO IS ALIGNED WITH THE

SOCIALIST PARTY. NO DECISION HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED AS TO RESUMPTION OF PUBLICATION OF THE SEVERAL MAGAZINES ALSO OWNED BY THE "O SECULO" COMPANY. THE COMPANY HAD A LARGE NUMBER OF COMMUNIST-SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES, MOST OF WHOM HAVE REMAINED ON THE PAYROLL, WHO CANNOT BE PLEASED WITH THE TURN OF EVENTS. THERE IS A POTENTIAL FOR RENEWED TURMOIL.

3. COMMENT: THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT HAS SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD RIDING THE COUNTRY OF MAJOR COMMUNIST INROADS IN TERMS OF MEDIA CONTROL. IT NEXT FACES THE DIFFICULT TASK OF CONSOLIDATING CONTROL OF RADIO, TELEVISION AND CERTAIN STATE-OWNED PAPERS WHERE LARGE NUMBERS OF PRO-COMMUNISTS REMAIN ON THE STAFFS. IT ALSO MUST GRAPPLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF TOO MANY STATE-OWNED, DEFICIT-RIDDEN NEWSPAPERS--AND WHICH ONES TO ELIMINATE. THE GOP HAS INDICATED TWO PAPERS EVENTUALLY WILL HAVE TO BE CLOSED.

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